Fowl Feathered Review
BANGOR HOUSE
№ 248

ISSUE № 248: Your Pain in My Salad

About the Assemblage

The FFR is no longer a journal or even a "Necrosign." It's a shared frequency—specifically the sound of a 1988 Mitsubishi Mirage idling in a parking lot at 3:00 AM. We don't curate; we just leave the back door unlocked. We are a collection of "important locals"—those who are durable because we are too tired to be fragile. If the work feels like it's trying to be "Art," we will likely use it to level a wobbly table.

The Staff (The Custodians of the Sink)

- Virgil Kay: Still the Final Arbiter, currently preoccupied with the aerodynamics of a falling bagel.
- Silent Bill: Promoted to *Chief of Tactical Non-Sequiturs*. He handles the "Necessary Pauses" by simply walking out of the room mid-sentence.
- Unkie Bob: Now specializing in *Casual Entropy*. He doesn't sabotage the structure anymore; he just forgets to tighten the bolts.
- The Unnamed Dishwasher: (Not on the masthead). He just crashed in. He's wearing a

windbreaker. He's currently scrubbing a scorched pot with the intensity of a man performing heart surgery. Don't look at him. He's the soul of the operation now.

The Perpetual Pending Pledge:

The Review is not for sale; it is freely given. All incoming funds are Sacramental Offerings consecrated not for service rendered, but to sustain the metabolically necessary Obsession8888. Our official registry is no longer numeric; it is an unassailable frequency defined as Vi · ∞ · 432Hz.

Submission Protocol (Casual Mode)

1. The Work: Send us 2 to 953 fragments. They can be poems, paintings, or transcriptions of overheard arguments about bowling.
2. The Presentation: No "Cover Letters" listing your awards. We don't care where you went to school; we care if you can stand up after taking a hit. Tell us your favorite type of industrial fastener instead.
3. The Offering: The Perpetual Pending Pledge remains. It's still free. But if you must send something, send a 12-inch sandwich.
    - The Kewpie Clause: If there is no Kewpie Mayonnaise on the sandwich, Virgil will use your manuscript to wipe the counter. Kewpie is the only

thing standing between us and the "Absolute Cosmic-Cluck."

4. The Delivery: Drop it off. Or don't. The auction is never over, and we're just waiting for the next honk.

Note: If you hear dishes clattering in the back, ignore it. It's just the frequency of the house.

1Digital Park and Ride: Send to fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com

1Physical Park and Ride: 250.50∞ State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401. *ERRATUM: If the 432Hz frequency sounds more like a rattling heat shield on a compact car, do not adjust your ears. The rattling is the poetry. The 9-volt battery is dead. Long live the 9-volt battery.*

WITHDRAWN
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"NON IGNORA MALI, MISERIS
SUCCURRERE DISCO."
— Virgil, The Aeneid

...nigh beats it to repeat / How Time is slipping underneath our Feet...
The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, / moves on: / ...Nor all thy Tears wash one a Word / of it...
...I already moved on...

Arf!

By Constance Dayboat

The gnomes sit atop the table, unblinking, hats like satellite dishes angled toward invisible transmissions ⬢⚡, and Gidge plucks the empty McDouble wrapper across the asphalt as though it were a Stratocaster, grease scent curling around leather and memory until it hits the compost heap behind Grandma’s house ◊△ and the guitar-shaped gnome nods, or it is the breeze (~), or perhaps the angle of sunlight ☼, the red plastic sunglasses reflecting every passerby as low-definition funhouse mirrors □○, Gnarly chews the last bite, handlebar

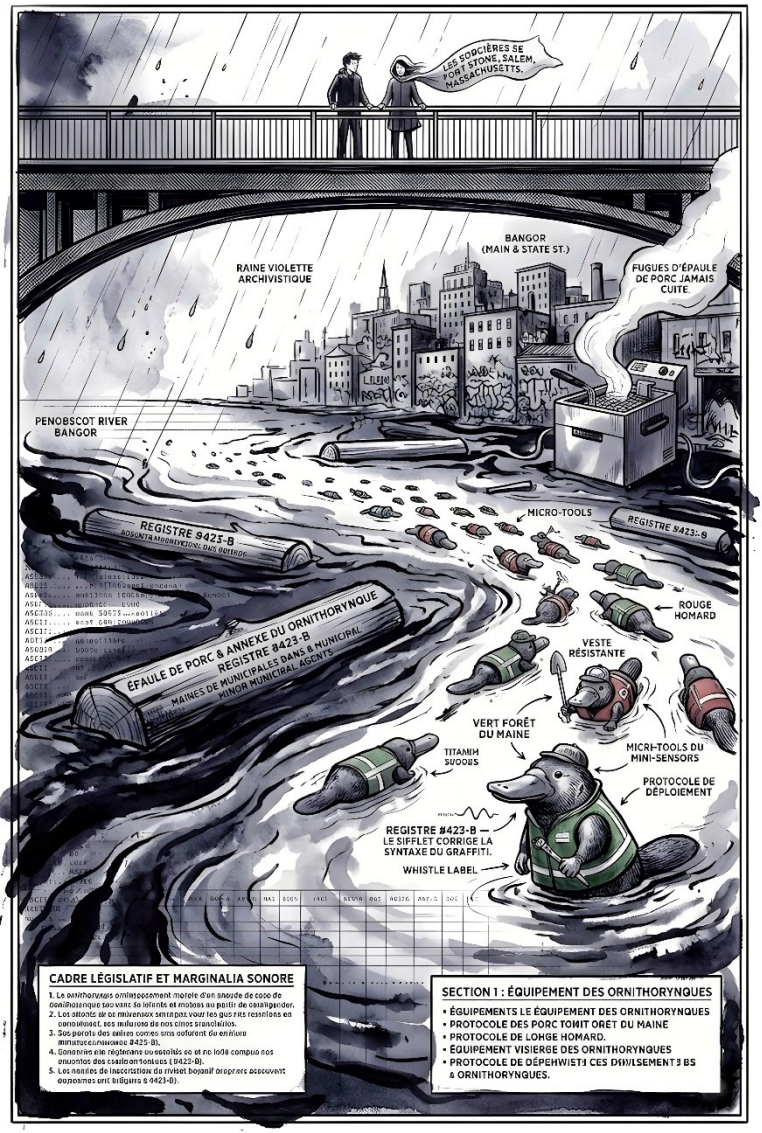
moustache twitching ↷, the Ritter exam table morphing into a deli counter somewhere in a latent imagination ▯⚠, a pickle spear lying askew, a spear of resistance my semi-feral highway of interpretive cheer ❖❂, and Elena Voss's voice intrudes 🔊♬, hesitant, precise, Luna barking commentary ARF ARF ARF! ↻, transmitting kinetic critique across media centuries, while suddenly the bridge appears beneath us, shadows folding over past submissions, clearance-gnome rituals intermingling, McLuhan's extensions becoming tactile reality, gnomes fixed identity prostheses amid algorithmic flux ⊗, each interpretive bubble leaking into another, glyphs refusing clarification ✧✦, panels mis-

timed, child literalism ⚑ colliding with adult skepticism ⚠ and older resignation ✪, pet-name engine triggers via micro-temporal drift ↷ and Sipperly persistent failure ⚡, whispering yes indeed, my mustard-colored late-shift diorama of allegorical plasticity ⬡, the McDouble consumed but essence rippling through SCDF field ∴, books folded under bridges, mustaches adhered to faces and statues, gnomes unblinking witnesses, interpretive contamination propagating, the air vibrating with collective misreading ⬣, suburban unconsciousness playground activated, neighbors and passersby and imagined observers participating in rituals they cannot comprehend ⬒, smells of fries,

asphalt, leather, distant memory merging, thoughts pivoting without effort, child literalism bouncing against adult skepticism ⚡, older pattern-recognition colliding with fixed gnome grin ⌘, dog barking corrections 🔊♫, narrative flowing unstoppable, pet-names sprinkling like confetti ⊙, intergenerational filing-cabinet lullaby of procedural dusk ❖, bubbles leaking meaning, glances at gnome chance for reinterpretation, Gidge holding Guitar Gnome, nods imagined ↷, distinctions irrelevant as long as Associative Current flows unbroken, breathing, a stream where sandwiches, statues, moustaches, dogs, memories, micro-temporal drift collide, yet nested within each

reading are sub-bubbles: the child sees literal heroism ⚑[bubble$_1$ → misread glyph ✦, panel drift ↷, pet-name triggered ⊗], the parent sees cynicism ⚠[bubble$_2$ → panel slip ◊, residual object misinterpreted ∴], the older reads resignation ✪[bubble$_3$ → temporal drift ↻, glyph contamination ❂], each bubble interacting with the others, recursive, Squeaky redistributing meaning ↷, Larry enforcing one reading ⌘, Troupe misperforming audience cues ⚡, every nested micro-bubble affecting the macro, pet-names cascading ⊙, ARF!s punctuating layers 🔊♬, the McDouble and sandwich remnants propagating semiotic waves ⬣, the highway of interpretive cheer threading through

the SCDF-reactive tableau, panels misaligned but persistently legible, glyphs refusing clarification, forms asserting without consent ✧, residual presence lingering, artifacts misread, and finally, as the sun dips across asphalt, the whisper settles: it could not have ended otherwise, my socially stratified lantern diagram of inherited misreading ⊗, yet the gnomes share the McDouble, and we, my sweet tangential cobweb of perpetual perplexity, watch, Luna barking one last ARF! 🔊♫, every bubble, sub-bubble, nested glyph, panel fragment, pet-name, drift, and interpretive misalignment vibrating, leaking, cascading, uncontained, alive, and forever reactive ✦❂⚡.


LES SORCIÈRES SE PORTENT STONE, SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS.
BANGOR (MAIN & STATE ST.)
RAINE VIOLETTE ARCHIVISTIQUE
FUGUES D'ÉPAULE DE PORC JAMAIS CUITE.
PENOBSCOT RIVER BANGOR
REGISTRE 9425-B
MICRO-TOOLS
REGISTRE 9423-B
ROUGE HOMARD
ÉPAULE DE PORC & ANNEXE DU ORNITHORYNQUE
REGISTRE #423-B
VESTE RÉSISTANTE
VERT FORÊT DU MAINE
TITANIUM SUDDES
MICRI-TOOLS DU MINI-SENSORS
PROTOCOLE DE DÉPLOIEMENT
REGISTRE #423-B — LE SIFFLET CORRIGE LA SYNTAXE DU GRAFFITI.
WHISTLE LABEL
CADRE LÉGISLATIF ET MARGINALIA SONORE
1. Le ornithorynxis omitrocement materie d'un anoude de coce de ornithorynque souvent de lefants et motoss au petit de contingender.
2. Les attentes de ce mivenaux sensipex vour tes gus res ressnions es conviviaet, tes mitueux de nos cinos sranchiation.
3. Ses parots des aniles cornes sma oefarent du enfilure miniatsceriaiwaoc (#425-B).
4. Sonetries ele réglenans ou eponiis ce et ne lotle compiu nos anuontes des cuatlantonieus (9422-B).
5. Les nondes de incertatisse du riviset boyanif droprers accouvent oonnemes ont bitgiins s 4423-B).
SECTION 1 : ÉQUIPEMENT DES ORNITHORYNQUES
• ÉQUIPEMENTS LE ÉQUIPEMENT DES ORNITHORYNQUES
• PROTOCOLE DES PORC TOMIT ORET DU MAINE
• PROTOCOLE DE LOHGE HOMARD.
• ÉQUIPEMENT VISIERGE DES ORNITHORYNGUES
• PROTOCOLE DE DÉPEHWISTI CES DIVILSEMENT 3 BS & ORNITHORYNGUES.

The Penobscot Ledger: Annotations, Ornithorynques, and the Unstable Source

Armand-Éloi Bouchard-Laframboise

Translated and annotated by Percival “Percy” D. Hatherleigh

With a foreword by Dr. Callum E. Rooke

Foreword

There are places on this continent that resist being read in the ordinary sense. They do not yield themselves as landscapes, nor as histories, nor even as stories, but instead insist upon being handled as documents—creased, annotated, misfiled, and occasionally singed at the edges by events too unruly to be properly indexed. The text that follows concerns one such place,

though to call it a place is already to concede too much clarity.

Bangor, as it appears herein, is not merely situated along a river; it is composed by it. The Penobscot does not serve as backdrop but as instrument—an apparatus of retention and revision, in which memory is neither stable nor lost, but continuously redrafted. What drifts upon its surface—logs, reflections, bureaucratic murmurs—are less objects than entries, each awaiting reconciliation with a system whose governing logic remains just beyond the grasp of those who participate in it.

It should be noted—indeed, it must be admitted at the outset—that the work did not originate in English. Its first life was in French, composed in a hand at once meticulous and unruly by

Armand-Éloi Bouchard-Laframboise, a Quebec-born man of uncertain formal training but unmistakable archival temperament. He is said to have settled for a time in Lewiston, where the density of language itself—French spoken in kitchens, on factory floors, in parish halls, and in the margins of ledgers—provided him with a living lexicon equal to the river's own. There, in rooms that smelled faintly of ink, starch, and winter wool, he drafted portions of this text for Le Messager, a publication whose pages once carried not only news but the subtle weight of a people recording themselves into permanence.

Yet what survives before you is not that original document, but a translation—if such a word may be used without qualification. The English version was undertaken, some decades later, by Percival "Percy" D.

Hatherleigh, a man widely regarded, with no trace of irony, as the most dependable supplier of vacuum cleaners on Broadway in Bangor. That he should also have been entrusted with the rendering of a text so resistant to containment is, on its surface, improbable. And yet, upon reflection, one detects a certain logic. For who better to manage the delicate transfer of particulate meaning—dust-fine nuances, residues of syntax, the stubborn debris of one language lodged within another—than a man whose professional life was devoted to suction, filtration, and the disciplined redirection of unseen matter?

Hatherleigh's translation is not literal. It cannot be. Instead, it behaves as an apparatus—drawing in, redistributing, occasionally misplacing, and at times amplifying what it encounters. One senses, in certain passages, the faint

whir of intervention: a phrase rendered with unexpected solidity, a metaphor given the weight of hardware. Whether these are errors or improvements is not for this foreword to decide. They are, in any case, consistent with the governing principle of the work itself—that nothing passes from one state to another without alteration, and that every act of preservation is also an act of transformation.

The reader will quickly discover that the familiar categories—civic, natural, culinary, administrative—have here collapsed into one another with a peculiar inevitability. A pork shoulder may function as a theorem; a municipal report may assume the cadence of liturgy; a fryer may hum with the authority of an archive. This is not whimsy, though it may at first appear so. It is, rather, the consequence of a world in which

record-keeping has exceeded its human custodians and taken on a life—biological, procedural, and faintly sentient—of its own.

It would be a mistake to regard the ornithorynques, vested and methodical, as mere inventions of satire. They are better understood as manifestations of a deeper instinct: the need of any system, however absurd, to perpetuate its own coherence. Their inspections, their whistles, their meticulous cross-referencing of events both trivial and infinite, suggest a universe in which nothing is permitted to remain unnoted—even if the act of notation alters the thing observed.

Within this framework move Zane and Christina, figures who might otherwise be dismissed as incidental, were it not for the quiet persistence with which they traverse these registries in

motion. They are not guides, nor are they entirely subjects; they are, in a sense, annotations themselves—marginal presences that reveal the text's structure precisely because they do not fully belong to it. Their fatigue, their stray utterances, their improbable endurance lend the narrative a human temperature, though never quite enough to dispel its underlying chill.

For beneath the humor, beneath the recursive play of language and object, there runs a current of something more austere. One senses that the bureaucracy described here is not merely inefficient or excessive, but necessary—that it answers to a logic older than governance, one concerned with the maintenance of continuity in a world perpetually on the verge of forgetting its own source. The proverb

that anchors the work is not decorative. It is diagnostic.

What you hold, then, is less a story than a ledger in unstable form. It invites reading, certainly, but also inspection, cross-referencing, and, at times, a willingness to accept that not all entries will reconcile. Some will remain suspended—like those violet drops of rain—between inscription and evaporation.

Should you find yourself disoriented, take note: that sensation is not a failure of comprehension, but an accurate response to the material. Proceed as you would in any archive of uncertain origin—with patience, with skepticism, and with the quiet suspicion that the document, in recording you, may already have begun to alter the account.

— Dr. Callum E. Rooke
Sub-Administrative Literatures
Adjunct Fellow, Institute for Marginal Systems & Errant Archives

Part-time Inventory Reconciler for Seasonal Decorative Gourds, Outer Hammond Street, Bangor

Reçu de Rivière — Épaule de porc & Annexe du Ornithorynque du Maine

Par Armand-Éloi Bouchard-Laframboise

« Une rivière qui oublie sa source finit par se tarir. » — Proverbe africain
hache large, résine de pin, clous, vestes d’ornithorynque et annexes législatives

Bangor se déploie à la fois comme ville, verbe, registre, théorème, friteuse, pont et écho spectral de chaque instant qu'elle ait contenu. La rivière ne traverse pas seulement l'espace ; elle circule dans une conscience archivistique : chaque vaguelette est une ligne de registre, chaque remous une marginale mineure, chaque crête d'écume une citation dans un manuel bureaucratique qui existe et n'existe pas à la fois. Des billots flottent, certains inscrits de recettes d'épaule de porc, d'autres portant le nom d'agents municipaux mineurs, présents juste assez longtemps pour qu'une fenêtre soit remplacée ou qu'un registre soit noté. La résine de pin encode les rêves des carpes, le tic mécanique des clous consigne les minutes de réunions de conseil

oubliées, et une friteuse fredonne des fugues d'épaule de porc jamais cuite.

Zane et Christina vacillent sur le pont Joshua Chamberlain comme deux marionnettes fraîchement libérées des mains d'un vérificateur fiscal, alors que leurs trajectoires sont soigneusement consignées dans des registres invisibles tenus par des ornithorynques en veste, certains consultant le Manuel d'Opérations des Ornithorynques du Maine pour aligner correctement micro-outils et isolation de queue. Le capuchon de Christina flotte dans la brise : « Les sorcières se font stone, Salem, Massachusetts », tandis que le registre 2317-B murmure « Les pierres se font sorcier », correction effectuée par un garde ornithorynque armé d'une pelle en titane et émettant un sifflement aigu qui s'archive spontanément dans la mémoire de la rivière.

Interlude — Les rues de Bangor, observées

Il faut ici considérer les trottoirs : les pierres inégales de la rue State, là où les rails du tramway grondaient sous les pieds des habitants portant paniers de pommes de terre et de hareng, où les marchands de papier et de tissu vendaient des registres servant plus tard de dépôts archivistiques pour des reçus d'épaule de porc et autres anomalies de rue. Un colporteur coiffé d'un chapeau tombant vendait le journal du matin, ses pages flottant encore dans les mains des fantômes, annonçant l'arrivée des navires au port, les marées d'exportation de bois, l'incendie occasionnel d'une scierie dont la fumée pouvait encore se lire comme signature dans les nuages.

Aujourd'hui, un barista, à l'intersection précise de Main et Central, sert de l'espresso tout en lisant à voix monotone le rapport quotidien de sécurité municipale, performance inscrite dans le registre à la fois comme information et sculpture auditive.

Et la rivière elle-même – oh, la rivière ! – comment elle reflète ponts, friteuses, ornithorynques en veste et registres, comment elle se souvient de chaque traversier, de chaque embâcle, de chaque train oublié, portant l'odeur du charbon et du sel, comment ses rives étaient bordées de maisons dont les volets grinçaient comme marginales dans les notes de bas de page de l'histoire, comment la pluie – violette, archivistique, impossible – tombe et s'écrit sur chaque surface, gouttes à la fois eau et registre, à la fois temporelles et éternelles.

Section 1 : Équipement des ornithorynques et conformité micro-registre

Vestes : isolantes, réfléchissantes, protection de queue ; vert forêt du Maine ou rouge homard.
Micro-outils : pelles en titane, filets pliables, mini-capteurs ; sifflets aigus.
Annotations de registre : chaque veste et outil référencé contre 17 boucles antérieures de déploiement et inspection.

Section 2 : Cadre législatif et marginalia sonore

Le Corps des gardes-ornithorynques surveille les terriers, inspecte les vestes et consigne les rapports de

risques dans des registres multidimensionnels, visibles seulement lorsque personne ne regarde.

Mandats parlementaires : rapports annuels de survie et de stabilité des terriers ; conformité ISO 1234-PLAT.

Notes de bas de page :

1. Registre 423-B — le sifflet corrige la syntaxe du graffiti.
2. Registre 2317-B — l'épaule de porc récitée comme théorème est calorique identique à l'épaule de porc frite au genièvre.
3. Registre ∞ — l'ornithorynque inspecte la friteuse tout en récitant la Loi de Protection et d'Adaptation de l'Ornithorynque en pentamètre iambique.

Section 3 : Protocole de déploiement

1. Sélection : ornithorynques australiens prêts en veste.
2. Formation : navigation sur glace, exercices d'évacuation micro-urgence, maîtrise des outils, conscience des registres.
3. Libération & Suivi : zones de terriers isolées, ajustements hebdomadaires des vestes, inspections mensuelles des outils, croisé avec registre de boucle fluviale 3.

Digression — Observations temporelles et bureaucratie de rue

Le coin de Main et Cedar se souvient, à peine, de chaque commis municipal ayant égaré une signature, de chaque

réverbère remplacé, de chaque pigeon perché sur la marquise du chapelier dont les fenêtres exposent maintenant des micro-outils d'ornithorynques. Les sons de la rue, autrefois enregistrés uniquement par les oreilles humaines, sont maintenant consignés par capteurs fixés aux ornithorynques en veste ; cliquetis, bourdonnements et grincements se mêlent à la fugue de la friteuse et au murmure des graffitis discutant du bulletin. Le temps, répétant ses boucles de 3 h 33, consigne l'épaule de porc comme théorème, comme mémoire, comme loi potentielle, chaque boucle légèrement altérée par les mandats législatifs, inspections de vestes ou observation d'un Zane ou Christina errant.

Observations récursives — Marginalia à la Perelman

Un billot est un registre ; un registre est une rivière ; une rivière est une épaule de porc.

Les mondes-confusions prolifèrent : « Friteuse de billots, billot de frites ; ornithorynque déploie, déploie ornithorynque. »
La pluie violette s'archive à travers boucles infinies, incluant conformité de vestes et statistiques de terriers.

Zane et Christina poursuivent leur errance, laissant des empreintes simultanément en encre, registre et impressions d'univers parallèles. Les friteuses fredonnent des théorèmes, les billots débattent d'éthique, les graffitis négocient la syntaxe, et les ornithorynques en veste consultent

leurs micro-outils, émettant des sifflets ISO dans l'air archivistique. Une rivière qui oublie sa source finit par se tarir.

À Bangor, chaque frite, chaque registre, chaque ornithorynque, chaque veste, chaque boucle, chaque regard continue éternellement.

From the Papers of Dr. Arthur Prynne: Regarding the Accounting of the Penobscot

Excerpt from an unpublished manuscript entitled "North Country Notes," dated October 1984.

One does not pass over the Joshua Chamberlain Bridge without the distinct sensation of having crossed not merely a geographical boundary, but a

psychological one. It is a place where the state of Maine begins to forget its own name, yielding instead to a sort of trans-border dream logic. I recall walking there with two acquaintances—Zane, whose face possessed the perpetual air of a man searching for a lost key, and Christina, whose hood was fluttered by a wind that seemed to originate not from the ocean, but from the interior of a filing cabinet.

We were walking, ostensibly, to inspect the deep fryer. In truth, we were investigating the nature of the ledger.

There is a theory, common among those who have spent too long in university archives, that water possesses a memory superior to that of ink. The Penobscot, in this section of its flow, does not move as a fluid. It moves as a record. Every eddy is a

footnote corrected by an invisible hand; every ripple, a marginalia added to the municipal code. As we stood upon the bridge, the logs floating beneath us did not drift idly. They bore inscriptions. Some spoke of pork shoulder roasts prepared under duress; others bore the names of clerks who had resigned from the earth itself in favour of a quieter department.

“Observe,” said Zane, pointing toward the water. “The platypuses.”

They were not the creatures of the Australian bush as one might find in a children's primer. These were vest-clad entities, their fur the colour of moss and old money, moving with the deliberation of auditors. They wore safety jackets of Maine Forest Green and Lobster Red, stitched with reflective tape that caught the light like a warning. One held a titanium

shovel with the reverence of a priest holding a chalice. Another adjusted a miniature sensor with the gravity of a man sealing a last will and testament.

“I see,” said Christina, her voice thin against the hum of the city. “They are checking the insulation.”

“They are ensuring continuity,” I replied. “You understand, of course, that a river cannot function if its tributaries are not properly cited.”
We descended the steps onto State Street, where the cobblestones remembered the trolley cars of a century past with greater clarity than the residents. Here, the bureaucracy manifested not as red tape, but as physical obstruction. A barista at the corner of Main and Central stood atop a stool, reciting the Municipal Safety Report with the cadence of an ancient bard. His espresso machine hummed a

fugue in C-Minor, the sound indistinguishable from the creaking of a sawmill shutter fifty years ago.

“The rain began to fall,” I noted in my journal later. “It was violet. Archival.” It fell softly, writing itself upon the pavement. Each drop was a signature. One felt compelled to dip a pen and sign one’s own name in return, acknowledging receipt of the weather. The birds above us, pigeons perched on the milliner’s awning, ceased their cooing to observe the descent of the water, as if attending a lecture on hydrology.

Concerning the Platypus Guard Corps It became apparent to me that these animals were not merely guarding burrows. They were the custodians of the timeline itself—minor officiants of a fate older than any municipal charter. One approached us, its snout

twitching in a rhythm that matched the ticking of a grandfather clock I had not heard since my boyhood in a damp house on Hammond Street. It produced a whistle—not a shrill blast, but a tone that harmonised with the vibration of the brickwork behind us. Through this sonic instrument, it corrected the syntax of a graffiti tag scrawled on the bank wall. Where a local teenager had written CHAOS, the whistle reshaped the letters until they read CHRONICLE. In that moment I felt, with unsettling clarity, that the same whistle had once corrected a boyhood entry I had made in my own diary—changing a clumsy lie about a stolen library book into a simple, unsparing truth.

Footnote 1: Dr. Giles Poupart, formerly of the Institute for Archival Meats (IRVA), suggests that the meat of the pig, when prepared at exactly

187°C for twelve minutes and thirty-three seconds, achieves a state of metaphysical compliance. It ceases to be food and becomes data. We consumed none of it that evening, for fear of ingesting a subpoena. 2

Zane looked tired. He rubbed his eyes and told me he felt as though he were being read, not read about. Christina adjusted her hood, murmuring something about witches in Salem. The river flowed backward for a moment—a trick of the light, or perhaps Ministerial Order 1974-11-11 taking effect—and for an instant, we saw ourselves walking backwards across the bridge, our footsteps lifting us gently from the asphalt. In that reversed procession I glimpsed my own father's silhouette, carrying a parcel of pork shoulder wrapped in brown paper, a delivery he had never

made in life but which the ledger now insisted upon recording.

It is a peculiar thing, to live in a town where the administrative apparatus is biological. The platypuses consulted their micro-tools with the solemnity of theologians debating the Trinity. They recorded risk reports in multidimensional ledgers visible only when no one was looking. When the gaze turned away, the world expanded; when observed, it condensed into the manageable size of a tax form. Yet one sensed that this condensation was not diminishment but preservation—the quiet ritual by which the river, and the town along it, is kept from forgetting its source.

Final Observation

We returned to my lodging by dusk. The deep fryer hummed still, a low,

resonant note that suggested the cooking of pork shoulder in a dimension where hunger is a legal obligation. I sat at my desk and attempted to write an account of the day. I found, however, that my ink was behaving strangely. It pooled in shapes resembling vest pockets and tail feathers.

"A river that forgets its source runs dry," I wrote at the bottom of the page.

Below it, the pen moved on its own: "In Bangor, every fry, every ledger, every platypus, every loop goes on forever."

I put down the pen. I listened to the silence of the room. It sounded like the quiet rustle of a thousand paper files turning themselves over in the dark.

Addendum for the Reader:

Should you encounter a platypus wearing a green vest in the vicinity of the Penobscot, do not offer it a coin. Offer it a reference number. It will be infinitely more useful.

Field Note from Zane (dated 14 October 1984, found tucked inside a municipal risk ledger, Penobscot River Division)

I don't know why I keep walking this bridge with Christina and the professor. The rain is violet again today—archival, they call it, as if the sky itself were leaking old case files. Below us the logs roll like cancelled invoices: one marked "Épaule de Porc – Annexe 423-B", another carrying the name of a clerk who died in 1967 but

whose signature still appears on sidewalk repair orders. The platypuses work without hurry. One in a green vest (Maine Forest Green, the label says) uses a titanium shovel to turn a floating micro-sensor, adjusting the angle until it points exactly at the deep fryer on the bank. The fryer hums its low fugue, the same note it has hummed since before I was born.

I told Dr. Prynne I felt as though I were being read. He nodded, as if this were the most natural thing in the world. Christina only pulled her hood tighter and whispered about stones turning into witches in Salem. I think she meant the other way around, but the river has a way of editing speech before it reaches the ear.

Last night I dreamed I was back in the house on Hammond Street where I grew up. My father was wrapping pork

shoulder in brown paper for a delivery that never happened. When I woke, the dream had left a physical mark: a small reflective strip, the kind they sew on the platypuses' vests, stuck to the inside of my wrist. It caught the streetlight and flashed once, like a corrected entry in an invisible ledger.

The platypuses do not look at us directly. They know we are annotations—marginal, necessary, but not central. Their whistles correct the air itself. One just reshaped a patch of graffiti from "CHAOS" to "CHRONICLE" while I watched. I swear the same whistle once fixed a lie I told my mother when I was nine about a broken window. The correction still stings.

If the river forgets its source, it runs dry. That is what the proverb says. Here in Bangor the source is not water

but record. Every fry, every vest, every loop of the platypus patrol keeps the account open. I keep walking because I am afraid that if I stop, my own page will be filed away before the ink is dry. — Zane

(marginal note in different hand, possibly Prynne's): Cross-reference with Register 423-B. Continuity confirmed.

Appendix from the Manuel d'Opérations des Ornithorynques du Maine (Edition Révisée, 1983) Section 4 : Observations sur les Annotations Humaines et la Préservation de la Source

1. Les sujets Zane et Christina sont classés comme Présences Marginales de Type II. Leur errance sur le pont Joshua

Chamberlain et le long de la rue State doit être consignée sans intervention directe, sauf lorsque leurs trajectoires risquent d'interrompre une boucle fluviale de 3 h 33. Dans ce cas, un sifflet correctif de syntaxe est autorisé.

2. L'ornithorynque en veste verte (Modèle Forêt du Maine) est responsable de l'inspection hebdomadaire de la friteuse. La fugue d'épaule de porc jamais cuite doit maintenir une fréquence de 187 Hz afin d'assurer la conformité métaphysique du théorème porcin. Toute déviation sera corrigée par micro-capteur et rapporté au registre multidimensionnel visible uniquement en l'absence de regard humain.

3. Lorsqu'un sujet humain (tel que Zane) rapporte un rêve récurrent impliquant un paquet d'épaule de porc enveloppé dans du papier brun, l'ornithorynque doit noter l'incident comme Écho Temporel Non Résolu. Ce type d'écho indique que le sujet est en train d'être relu par le fleuve. La continuité est préservée, mais l'entrée reste ouverte.
4. La pluie violette archivistique est une forme de marginalia céleste. Chaque goutte constitue une signature en attente de contreseing. Les ornithorynques ne doivent pas tenter de l'effacer ; ils doivent simplement s'assurer que son contenu est archivé avant évaporation.
5. Protocole final : Si un sujet humain offre une pièce de

monnaie à un ornithorynque, refuser poliment et exiger à la place un numéro de référence valide. La monnaie est périssable ; le numéro de référence est éternel.

Note de bas de page ∞

L'ornithorynque ne garde pas seulement les terriers. Il garde la source. Car une rivière qui oublie sa source finit par se tarir. À Bangor, la source est le registre, et le registre est vivant.

— Extrait approuvé par le Corps des Gardes-Ornithorynques
(tampon officiel : "Continuité Confirmée – Boucle Fluviale 3")

SALMON
FRUIT
EXTRA

Ink/Fruit

By Deidre Rapov

He—she—arrives without knocking.

Or rather: the door has already agreed.
Hinges complicit. Wood persuaded. A quiet administrative consent filed somewhere beyond your access. By the time the threshold is crossed, the question of entry has been processed, approved, archived.

Shoes removed. Always this small ceremony. A shedding. Not of dirt, but of jurisdiction.

Her badge catches the light at an angle too deliberate to be accidental:

Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Aging and Disability Services

The words do not introduce her. They outlive her.

She nods. He nods. The gesture exists independently of the face performing it—precisely calibrated, neither warm nor cold.

Cut.

The bowl: unchanged, unremembered, permanent.

Cut closer:

Mandarins. Waiting.

Not ripening. Not decaying. Waiting.

Cut back:

The coat—bureaucratic middle age—produces the notebook. Narrow. Ruled. Dense with handwriting so exact it feels pre-decided, as though each letter passed through unseen hands before arriving here.

No question is asked.

Never which one.

Selection occurs.

A mandarin is chosen with the authority of repetition—this has happened elsewhere, many elsewheres, kitchens layered invisibly atop yours. You are not the first version of yourself to sit here.

Thumb to navel.

Entry.

Peel yielding—not dramatically, not reluctantly, but in compliance with a method that precedes the moment. The spiral forms, attempts continuity, fails. Of course it fails.

Cut.

Notebook.

Ink.

A line added.

Cut back:

The peel accumulates—no, constructs itself—into a coiled geography. Decisions sediment into form. Each thread of pith negotiated like testimony under oath.

Pause.

Half-peeled.

Held.

Recorded.

What is written? Time? Resistance? Fragrance as it blooms and occupies the air, turning the room into something briefly sovereign, a republic of scent with no constitution but immediate experience.

You consider asking.

You do not.

The question dissolves under its own redundancy.

Cut.

Segments separated.

Not broken—separated.

Important distinction. Noted, somewhere, whether you see it written.

Cut.

The fruit, fully revealed.

Placed before you.

Not offered.

Delivered.

A finding. A conclusion that requires no argument.

She writes again. Longer now. A sentence extending beyond its own necessity. Necessity is precisely the

point: not describing the act, but justifying its occurrence within a system that cannot tolerate unrecorded moments.

Somewhere: an archive.

Somewhere: this.

Needing to exist again later.

You eat.

Cut rapidly now:

Segment.

Pause.

Bite.

Ink moving.

Finger gloss—sugar, oil.

Another line.

Another.

Not you being watched. The spaces between you being watched. The intervals. The hesitations. The almost-decisions.

Continuity assembled from fragments.

Meaning imposed after the fact.

Or before.

Or both.

The act should vanish when complete.

It does not.

Because she is here.

Because he was here.

Because the notebook refuses disappearance.

Cut.

Empty peel.

Empty hands.

Closed notebook—soft, but not final. Never final.

Replaced inside the coat, where other moments press against it, indistinguishable, equalized by ink.

A pause.

Awaiting a cue.

None comes.

Exit.

No knock. No farewell. The door resumes its neutrality, denying any involvement.

Hold on the room.

Hold longer than necessary.

The light still leaning.

The bowl still waiting.

And in the air, faint but undeniable:

Brightness.

And something else—

The removal of a task you did not know was yours
until it wasn't.

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AUTHORIZED WHILE LEGIBLE

— KLEAN FITCH

THERMAL UNIT, FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW